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TENSE USAGE DIFFICULTIES: A CASE IN NYIMATI JHS ONE STUDENTS

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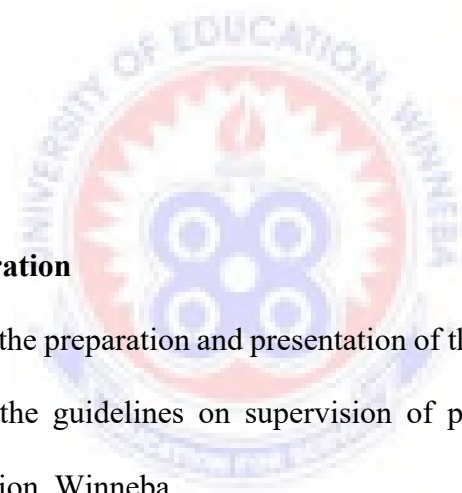
DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that, this project work is the result of my own original research and that

no part of it has been presented to the University of Education Winneba or elsewhere.

Candidate's: Bakuwie Jennifer

Signature ………………………….

Date ……………………………….

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this project work was supervised

in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of project work laid down by the

University of Education, Winneba.

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Kwaku Ofori

Signature ……………………..……….

Date …………………………..………….

DEDICATION

To God be the glory

This research is dedicated to my supervisor, Dr. Kwaku Ofori, Mr. Amos Antumwini,

Mr. Boakye Acheampong, and myself, Bakuwie Jennifer.

May God give us long life and blessings.

AKNOWLEGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The researcher identified the problem of pupils inability to use past tense well at Nyamati JHS one in the Sissala West District of the Upper West region in Ghana. The purpose of this paper is to identify the underlying factors for the weakness of tense usage and address the practical problems faced by the students of   JHS one students to use tenses appropriately in communication. The research design was qualitative. The target population for the study was the pupils of Nyimati JHS in the Sissala West District of the Upper West region in Ghana. In this research the census technique was used to select all the JHS One students (N = 22) of Nyimati JHS to examine their first term exams answer sheets for English Language for the 2019/2020 academic year. The instruments used for the research are observation, interview and test. Based on the responses given by pupils and teachers it was found out that the students had difficulty in tense usage and it affected their general academic performances. Students' score in English language was the lowest among the four core subjects studied at the JHS.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Language in the Primary School is significant in the process of education and development. Grammar is the back bone of any language. It has become the subject of study of low achievement level of the students in the subject of English. It is so important that you cannot condone or overlooked because it can result in facing difficulties to the student after graduating from high school and transition to college or leaving the realm of practical life. The teaching English grammar at this level regarded the important stage for developing the cognitive system of students. It must be the base of awareness that make a strong generation who will build and contribute to the society. The problem is when the students learn the past tense and he/she does not differentiate between the irregular and regular verbs, for instance when you ask them, what is the past tense of the verb speak ,they directly replies (speaked) with the addition of (ed) to use the generalization of the irregular verbs or in the case of present tense when third person subject such as (Ahmed play football), they don't add suffix 's' to the end of the verbs or they neglect to add 'es' in the case of the verbs that are end with voiceless (ch, sh, x, s, o). It is expected that the students still make grammatical mistakes but we must to know how to help them in good way to avoid these mistakes in the future and make the suitable suggestions and solutions to overcome the odd and growth their confidence. Any teacher may be found this phenomenon in secondary schools. This study attempts to find out the difficulties by analyzing with the help of descriptive statistics and then establishes significant solutions. There are many reasons which contribute to the low achievement

level of student for instance, the students themselves, teachers, surrounding environment, curriculum educational or the mean, hence, the biggest role is of teachers they are responsible for finding solution and alternatives to solve the problem and not lose sight of the student's role as the center of educational process which suffers deficit.

The primary aim of learning a foreign language is to communicate in it, both in spoken and written mode. (Abdulmalik, 2017). Although tense and aspect occupy a major part in the language teaching materials, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners continue making mistakes in those areas even when they are in advanced level studies. (Rahman & Ali 2015). The success in developing the ability to communicate and use the target language requires strategic teaching and training which the learners should receive at school level.

Tense is related to time, and time refers to 'when' an action takes place. It expresses the time that an action occurs in relation to the moment of speaking (Cowan, 2008). Salaberry & Shirai (2002) says that tense is a deictic category that places a situation in time with respect to some other time, usually moment of speech. Tense has three 'dimensions': 'present', 'past', and 'future' (Cowan, 2008). Tense therefore refers to a 'time' something took place as to whether 'now', 'before' or 'to come'

Most students in schools in Ghana fall short in the development of written and spoken proficiency in English in terms of tense usage and Nyimati JHS in the Sissala West District of the Upper West region in Ghana is not an exception. This research therefore seeks to identify the underlying factors for the weakness of tense usage and address the

practical problems faced by the students of Nyimati JHS one students to use tenses appropriately in communication.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There are many challenges with the usage of tense among students who study English as a foreign language. Although tense and aspect occupy a major part in the language teaching materials, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners continue making mistakes in those areas even when they are in advanced level studies. Most students in schools in Ghana fall short in the development of written and spoken proficiency in English in terms of tense usage difficulties and a case in Nyimati JHS one students.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this paper is to identify the underlying factors for the weakness of tense usage and address the practical problems faced by the students of JHS one students to use tenses appropriately in communication.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are:

1. identifying the leading causes o problems in tense usage

2. identifying the effects of tense usage difficulties on students' academic performances for Nyimati, JHS One.

3. identifying the strategies to put in place to address tense usage difficulties in Nyimati, JHS One

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions are:

1. What are the leading causes o problems in tense usage?

2. What are the effects of tense usage difficulties on students' academic performances for Nyimati, JHS One?

3. What strategies can be put in place to address tense usage in difficulties in Nyimati, JHS One?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study may be important for the Ministry of Education policy makers and implementers. The Nation might also benefit in that the study will lay a good foundation for present and future physical education teachers. The accumulated evidence presented in this study would also serve as a resource for helping physical educators make a stronger case for the importance of quality physical education.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

The researcher would not able to go to all schools in Ghana and even those in the Upper West Region due to limited time frame and financial constraints. The research would be delimited to Nyimati Junior High School in the Sissala West District.

1.8 Limitations of the study

The results would have to be treated with some caution and should not be generalized to other District/Regions since data was collected only in Nyimati Junior High School in the Sissala West District of Upper West Region of Ghana, though they may be referred to in

other comparative studies of a similar nature. Again, only the JHS One students in the school were considered.

1.9 Assumptions

It is assumed that the instrument used for gathering data was valid and that respondents responded truthfully.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is concerned with the review of related literature. The chapter discusses the Conceptual Framework, the concept of Tense, Tense Usage difficulty, error and mistakes in tense usage and overcoming tense usage difficulties.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

A number of studies (e.g., Marton & Morris, 2002; Marton & Tsui, 2004; Pang, 2002) indicate that teachers with theoretical grounding in the Theory of Variation by Marton and Booth (1997) tend to be considerably more effective in bringing about the intended learning outcomes than teachers without the explicit grounding. They conclude that students often experience the same phenomenon, such as a concept that the teacher wants to teach, in qualitatively different ways, and therefore variations in learning outcome are the norm. To improve teaching, the teacher should recognize that the students will understand what he or she intends to teach in different ways, should know what these different ways of understanding are, and should structure the teaching to enable students to see what is taught in the intended way (Marton & Tsui, 2004). With this same belief, the theory of variation was adopted for this research work and for that matter varied approaches such as songs, word cards and audio visuals would be used to help the students of in Nyamati JHS one to overcome tense usage difficulty.

2.2 The concept of Tense

Fadzilyna (2013) states that grammatical competence is one of the several competences that students have to master to be proficient in a certain language. In grammar, tenses hold an important point. She agrees with Azar (1999), that there are 12 kinds of tenses.

They are (a) simple present tense, (b) present continuous tense, (c) present perfect tense, (d) present perfect continous tense, (e) past tense, (f) past continuous tense, (g) past perfect tense, (h) past perfect continous, (i) future tense, (j) future continuous tense, (k) future perfect tense, (l) future perfect continuous tense. Every kind of tenses has their own functions. Past tense is used to describe actions that took place in the past and no longer take place in the present. It does not convey the same sense of continuity or relevance as the present perfect tense. Thus, past tense is important for those who want to talk about the past which has nothing to do with the future. Tense has a long research tradition dating back to the works of Aristotle, who distinguished between nouns and verbs, saying that the predication of the latter is relative to time – past, present and future (Klein, 1994). Different verb forms in Greek and later Latin were consequently called time forms or tense forms even though the forms carried two different types of oppositions (Hewson

2011). It was only much later – in the 20th century – when these two oppositions, aspect and tense, were properly differentiated in literature. Tense is related to time, and time refers to 'when' an action takes place. It expresses the time that an action occurs in relation to the moment of speaking (Cowan, 2008). Salaberry and Shirai (2002) says that tense is a deictic category that places a situation in time with respect to some other time, usually moment of speech. Tense has three 'dimensions': 'present', 'past', and 'future' (Cowan, 2008). Tense therefore refers to a 'time' something took place as to whether 'now', 'before' or 'to come'

2.3 Tense, Time and Aspect

It is significant to understand the meaning of these words; time, tense and aspect. Most people are likely to think that time and tense are identical because words such as past, present and future are associated. Actually, this is a wrong assumption. Time and tense are not associated with each other and they are not identical. (Namkaew, 2015)

In her review, Namkaew stated that tense is characterized as verb forms or a set of verb patterns which have various appearances used to specify a time affiliation i.e. present, past, future (Abdullah, 2013), or to indicate time movement. Tense may also indicate whether an action, activity, or state is, was, or will be complete, or whether it is, was, or will be in progress over a period of time. (Namkaew, 2015)

According to Namkaew, there are only two tenses in English verbs, present tense and past tense and that tense is used to pinpoint the time of event occurrences during the readers' utterance. Tense is used as linguistics terms to demonstrate the connection of time, situation, and the verb forms. (Namkaew, 2015; Maclin 2001)

Time is concerned with humans' reality, while tense is concerned with a linguistics area. The meaning of time refers to all activities that humans do in reality measured in temporal units such as year, month, and day (Dürich, 2005). Hornby (1975) stated that time is subdivided into three parts: present, past, and future (Abdullah, 2013), which do not engage with the language.

Aspect concerns the different perspectives which a speakers can take and express with regard to the temporal course of some event, action, process, etc.'(Rahman & Ali 2015; Klein, 1994). In other words, aspect refers to how speakers see the event. According to

Cowan (2008), aspect expresses how the speaker views the action of the verb; for example, an action that is seen as bounded and complete is perfect in aspect. If the action is seen as incomplete, it is imperfect in aspect, if seen as repeated; it is iterative, if seen as occurring regularly; it is habitual.

In English there are lot of tenses but for the purpose of this research we shall consider the present and past tenses.

a. Present Tense

We use the present simple tense when:

1. the action is general
2. the action happens all the time, or habitually, in the past, present and future
3. the action is not only happening now
4. the statement is always true

Pattern:

(Key: S=subject, V=verb)

1. Positive: S + V1 (s/es)

Example:

I eat banku.

She eats banku.

We eat banku.

2. Negative: S + DO/DOES + NOT + V1

For subject I, we, you, they use DO.

For she, he, it, Prince, Makayla use DOES.

Example:

I do not eat banku.

She does not eat banku.

3. Affirmative: DO/DOES + S + V1

Example:

DO you eat banku?

DOES she eat banku?
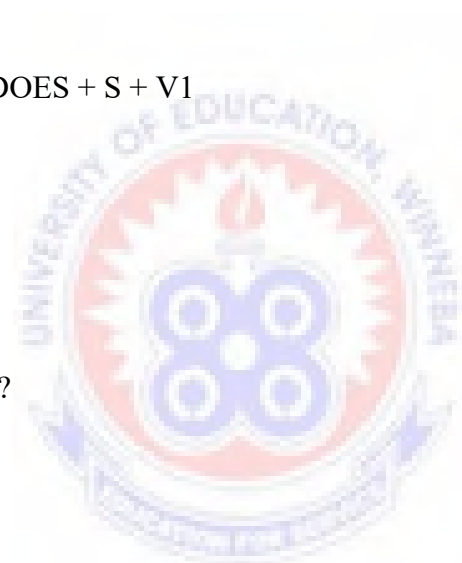
b. Past Tense

We use the past simple tense to talk about an action or a situation - an event - in the past. The event can be short or long.

Pattern:

1. Positive: S + V2

Example:

Prince came to London on Monday.

My Father ate his pie last year.

2. Negative: S + did not + V1

Example:

Price did not come to London on Monday.

My father did eat his pie last year.

3. Affirmative: Did + S + V1

Example:

Did John come to London on Monday?

Did my father eat his pie last year?

2.4 Tense Usage difficulty

There are some factors that cause tense usage errors. They are: ignorance of rule restriction, overgeneralization, incomplete application of rule, and false concept hypothesized. (Fadzilyna, 2013).

   i.   Ignorance of Rule Restriction

Ignorance of rule restriction is found to be the cause of 68.18% of errors in the recount texts made by the students in a research conducted by Fadzilyna (2013). Ignorance of rule restriction happens when the learners do not apply the rules appropriately because the learners fail to observe the restriction of existing structures. Based on the analysis, the researcher found that the ignorance of rule restriction happened because the students did not understand the structure of the past tense. The following sentence is an example that

the researcher took from the data: "When I celebrate my birthday." The sentence is grammatically wrong because the instruction that the researcher gave to the students is to make a recount text about the best moment in their life so that the sentences should be in the past form.

Thus, the correct sentence is "When I celebrated my birthday." Another example is "After the test was finish." The sentence is grammatically wrong because according to the pattern of the past tense, the thing after *be* should not be a verb. In order to make the sentence grammatically correct, the verb "finish" should be changed into an adjective, that is, "finished". Thus, the correct sentence is " After the test was finished." There are four sources of errors according to Brown (2007). They are interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, context of learning, and communication strategy. Based on the analysis, those examples belong to context of learning, in this example, the students seem to memorize the pattern of past tense, but could not contextualize properly.

ii.   Incomplete Application of Rule

Fadzilyna (2013) found out in her research that the incomplete application of rule is found in about 21.21% of the recount texts made by the students. According to Richards (1974), incomplete application of rule happens when the learners' errors derive from the faulty comprehension of distinction in the target language. Based on the analysis, the researcher found that the students wrongly understand the rule of the target language. The following sentence is the sample of incomplete application of rule that the researcher took from the data: "It my new experience." It seemed that the student did not know that the sentence needs the linking verb *be* (*was*) to make the sentence accurate. The sentence should be

"It was my new experience." Based on Brown (2007), the source of this error is interlingual transfer because the students seemed to transfer the language from their native language that is *Bahasa Indonesia*. Another example is the sentence "I was very liked it." The sentence is grammatically wrong because the students put the *be* (*was*) in the sentence while there was already a verb *liked*. The student did not know that the sentence does not use the proper pattern of past tense.

    iii.   False Concept Hypothesized

Again, Fadzilyna (2013), Based on her research analysis, reported that the false concept hypothesized is found to be the cause of about 7.57% of errors in the recount texts made by the students. False concept hypothesized happens when the learners fail to develop the rules to make an acceptable utterance. She made example from the data: "I acceptance in MTs." The source of the error in this sentence is context of learning. It is because this sentence is unacceptable and grammatically wrong since the word "acceptance" is a "noun". The noun "acceptance" should be changed into a verb, that is, "accept". It should also be in the past form. Furthermore, based on the context, to make the sentence sensible and acceptable, the sentence should be in the form of past passive voice, thus, the sentence should be "I was accepted in MTs." Another example is the sentence "Although this beach interesting looser with other beaches". This sentence is grammatically wrong. Besides, it is also difficult for the readers to understand the sentence. Thus, the source of the error in this sentence is communication strategy. The student seems to have difficulties in delivering their ideas.

iv.   Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization happens when the learners create a deviant structure on the basis of their experience of other structures in the target language. In other words, the learners generalize certain rules to create other sentences. Based on the analysis, overgeneralization occurs when the students regularize the irregular verb. Here is an example from the data: "We falled apart." In the sentence, the student regularized the irregular verb "fall" to become "falled." The word should be "fell" because it is an irregular verb. Thus, the sentence should be "We fell apart". Another example is the sentence "I sleeped at the car". In the sentence, the student also regularizes the irregular verb " sleep " by adding /-ed/, so it becomes "sleeped". The past form of the verb "sleep" is "slept" since it is an irregular verb. Thus, the correct sentence should be " I slept in the car". Those two examples have the same source of errors, that is, intralingual transfer because the students overgeneralize the irregular verbs into regular verbs. Overgeneralization is found in about 3.03% of the recount texts made by the students. (Fadzilyna 2013)

2.5 Error and Mistakes in Tense Usage.

Based on the surface strategy taxonomy, errors are classified into four types; omission, addition,

misformation, and misordering. (Fadzilyna, 2013, Dulay et al., 1982)

i.   Omission

Omission errors are characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well formed utterance.

ii.   Addition

As the opposite omission, addition is characterized by the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance. There are three kinds of additions in this class; double marking, regularization, and simple addition.

iii.   Misformation

Misformation is characterized by the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure. There are three types of misformation: regularization, archy, and alternating form.

iv.   Misordering

Misordering errors are characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or a group of morphemes in the utterance. Saadiyah (2009) briefly said that learning L2 is a lifelong process and it is often a challenging experience for L2 learners. It also applies to Ghanaian students who learn English as foreign language.

 According to Saadiyah (2009) errors in writing, such as, in the use of tenses, prepositions and vocabulary are the most common and frequent type of errors made by learners. The learners usually face difficulties in learning the grammatical aspects of the Target Language (TL), such as in subject-verb agreement, the use of preposition, articles and the use of correct tenses. Amaliyah (2009) said that a learner inevitably makes countless errors in learning the target language.

Making mistakes or errors is a natural process of learning and must be considered as part of cognition. Saadiyah, 2009, Ancker, 2000). L2 learners' errors are potentially important for the understanding of the processes of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Moreover, it is understood that learning an L2 is a gradual process, during which mistakes are to be expected in all stages of learning (Saadiyah, 2009; Candling, 2001). Mistakes will not disappear simply because they have been pointed out to the learners, contrary to what some language learners and teachers believe (Ferris, 2002; Saadiyah, 2009). According to Saadiyah (2009), many of the learners' errors happen due to the strategies that they use in language acquisition, especially their L2. The problem includes the reciprocal interference of the target language items; i.e., negative effect of their prior knowledge of their L1 on their absorption of L2. In this situation, error analysis would allow teachers to figure out on what areas to be focused and what kind of attention is needed in an L2 classroom.

 Amaliyah (2009) stated there is a value in analyzing errors, since this will lead at least to a better understanding of the difficulties that students face, and perhaps will contribute to the development of pedagogical strategies. The errors will reflect the problems that students face which should help the teachers decide what areas they should pay more attention and emphasize on. There are many other benefits we can get from analyzing errors. Vahdatinejad (2008) as cited by Saadiyah (2009) said that error analysis can be used to determine what a learner still needs to be taught. It provides the necessary information about what is lacking in his or her competence. He also makes a distinction between errors and lapses (simple mistakes). According to him, lapses are produced even

by native speakers, and can be corrected by themselves. They need spot correction rather than remedial, which is needed for errors.

In addition, Candling (2001) cited by Saadiyah (2009) considered Error Analysis as "the monitoring and analysis of learner's language". He referred to an error as a deviation. Moreover, according to Richards et al., (1996:127) as cited by Nzama (2004), error analysis has been conducted to identify strategies which learners use in language learning, to track the causes of learner's errors, obtain information on common difficulties in language learning or on how to prepare teaching materials. Similarly, as cited by Nzama (2004), Michaelides (1990:30) states that the systematic analysis of student's errors can be of great value to all those concerned, i.e., teachers, students and the researchers. For teachers it can offer a clear and reliable picture of his students' knowledge of the target language.

According to Corder (1967), error analysis has two objects: one theoretical and the other applied. The theoretical object is to understand what and how a learner learns when he/she studies an L2. The applied object is to enable the learners to learn more efficiently by using the knowledge of his dialect for pedagogical purposes. At the same time, the investigation of errors can serve two purposes, diagnostic (to in-point the problem) and prognostic (to make plans to solve a problem). Corder also said that it is diagnostic because it can tell us the learner's grasp of a language at any given point during the earning process. It is also prognostic because it can tell the teacher to modify learning materials to meet the learners' problems. Sercombe (2000) cited by Amaliyah (2009) explained that error analysis serves three purposes, which are to find out the level of language

proficiency the learner has reached, to obtain information about common difficulties in language learning, and to find out how people learn a language.

To conduct an error analysis, the researcher is sure that analyzing the students' writing is the best way. Similarly, Safiah (1978) cited by Saadiyah (2009) said that such errors can be seen clearly in the learners' written performance. Error Analysis was established by Stephen Pit Corder and colleagues in the 1960s and "consists of a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining learners' errors" as review by Garrido and Rosado, 2012; Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Learners' errors are significant in three ways: first, they give information about the language a learner is using; second, they provide information on how a language is learnt and finally, they provide information to the learner himself or herself since errors can be regarded as a device the learner uses in order to learn (Garrido & Rosado, 2012; Corder, 1981). Garrido and Rosado (2012) discussed that Error analysis also has pedagogical benefits because it gives useful input for designing and carrying out the teaching/learning process. Error analysis became a common method of getting information about learners' language during the early 1970s as an alternative method to contrastive analysis which was based on behaviourist theories and therefore claimed that the difficulties in mastering certain structures in a second language (L2) were only based on the differences between the learners' mother language (L1) and the second language (L2).

Error analysis has become less used mainly because it has some limitations. First, it only focuses on learners' errors and not on what learners can do right. Another disadvantage of EA is the fact that it overemphasizes production data. and again EA fails to account for avoidance strategy (Brown (2000; James 1998; Tarone, 1981). Despite these

drawbacks, error analysis is still considered a useful tool to gather information about learners' language. Erdogan (2005), for example, states that "error analysis enables teachers to find out the sources of errors and take pedagogical precautions towards them" (p. 262). For Mahmoud (2011), EA constitutes a link between language learning and teaching that can be exploited in initial as well as remedial teaching. As these authors illustrate, EA can become a useful tool to improve language teaching and, consequently, student learning. An error, therefore, reflects the learner's competence in L2.

When conducting research based on error analysis, a distinction between errors and mistakes must be made. Mistakes are unsystematic, due to memory lapses, physical states (tiredness) or psychological conditions while errors are systematic and correspond to the underlying knowledge of the language or transitional competence. An error is "a linguistic form or combination of forms, which in the same context and under similar conditions of production, would, in all likelihood, not be produced by the speakers' native speaker counterparts" (Garrido & Rosado, 2012; Lennon, 1991).

According to Brown (2000), a mistake can be self-corrected while an error cannot. This means, given the time and opportunity, the student should be able to correct his/her mistake(s). Corder (1981) establishes four steps to carry out error analysis research: collection of learners' speech sample, identification of errors, the description of the errors that have been identified and finally the explanation of learner's errors. In the first step, researchers collect a sample of learner language. Because the type of sample that is collected may influence the nature and distribution of the errors observed, it is important to describe the type of discourse collected and whether learners had time to plan their production or not. The identification of errors is the second step. It involves a comparison

between what the learner has produced and what a native speaker counterpart would produce in the same context. Every utterance/sentence produced by the learner is assumed to be erroneous. Those utterances that are shown to be well-formed through a comparison with a native speaker's sample are eliminated. The remaining utterances/sentences are the ones that contain errors. Once errors have been identified, the next step is describing learners' errors. To do so, it is necessary to have descriptive categories to classify and record the frequency of the errors that have been identified. There are different categories for describing errors. Corder (1981) classifies errors into two categories: overt and covert errors. "Overtly erroneous utterances are unquestionably ungrammatical at the sentence level. Covertly erroneous utterances are grammatically well-formed at the sentence level, but are not interpretable within the context of communication" (Brown, 2000). Dulay, Burt and Krashen's (1982) surface structure taxonomy is based on the ways surface structures are altered in erroneous utterances/sentences. According to this taxonomy, there are four principal ways in which learners modify target forms: omission, addition, misformation and misordering. Errors of omission refer to an element which should be present but has been omitted. Addition is the presence of an element which should not be part of the sentence or utterance. Misformation is the use of the wrong form or morpheme or structure. Misordering errors are incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance. The last step is the explanation of learners' errors. Even though the explanation of errors is still highly speculative because of the complex psychological and neurological process involved in language learning, experts have identified three major processes: interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer and context of learning. Interlingual errors are explained as the results of mother tongue influences.

Intralingual errors reflect the operation of learning strategies that can be considered universal. According to James (1998) these strategies can be classified as false analogy, misanalysis, incomplete rule application, exploiting redundancy, overlooking co-occurrence restrictions and system simplification. Finally, context of learning refers to the learning experience. The non-occurrence or low frequency of errors could be the result of a successful teaching. On the other hand, a high frequency of errors could be the result of inappropriate teaching methods and materials. Error analysis focuses on the errors learners make and is based on the comparison of learners' utterances/sentences in the target language and a native's utterances/sentences. Although error analysis has some drawbacks, it can help us to see how a learner's production deviates from target language forms and get information about the difficulties students face when learning a second or foreign language. With this information, instructors can plan the teaching/learning process to help students become successful in the task of learning a foreign or second language.

2.6 Debate about the Role of Instruction

Much research has been done about the effectiveness of instruction. One question that has been addressed by researchers interested in the effects of classroom input on interlanguage grammars is whether learners who receive classroom input are more successful in acquiring properties of an L2 than learners who are simply immersed in the target language, and whether implicit or explicit instruction is more effective.

A major review of studies of the effects of instruction was conducted by Norris and Ortega (2000) who carried out a meta-analysis that identified 250 relevant studies in the

literature. 77 of these studies could be classified in terms of instructional types: "a) explicit instruction—an approach to teaching that favours explicit rule explanation that focuses on forms and the derivation of rules, b) implicit instruction—an approach that allows acquisition of the target language to—take[…] place naturally, simply and without conscious operations" (Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006: p. 340), c) focus on meaning, d) focus on "form", and e) focus on "forms". According to Long (1991: pp. 45-46), "focus on 'form'—overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication. Some researchers have drawn a distinction between focus on 'form' and focus on 'forms'". The difference between "form" and "forms" is that the former encompasses both form and meaning while the latter only focuses on the target structure: "A focus on form entails a focus on formal elements of language, whereas focus on forms is limited to such a focus, and focus on meaning excludes it" (Doughty & Williams, 1998: p. 4). The aims of Norris and Ortega's (2000) review were to discover: 1) the overall effect of instruction compared with exposure; 2) if implicit or explicit instruction is more effective; and 3) the relative effects of attention to meaning, form meaning connections, or forms. The findings were consistent with Long's (1988) review showing that second language instruction does make a difference and the difference is substantial. Regarding the comparison of effectiveness between implicit and explicit instruction, it was found that explicit instruction has a clear advantage over implicit types of instruction.

The relative effectiveness of the instructional types identified is as follows: explicit focus on form (large effect) > explicit focus on forms (large effect) > implicit focus on form (medium effect) > implicit focus on forms (small effect). Doughty (2003) views these

findings in a critical light, and she suggests that research findings about instruction in the literature might be biased for a number of reasons. Some of these include the use of outcome measures which favour explicit and declarative knowledge; the use of the L2 system as the criterion of success without taking into account evidence of development, and test effects. She argues for an altogether more differentiated and fine-grained approach to investigating the effects of L2 instructional treatments. Thus, she believes the enhancement of input processing is the way to go in L2 instruction. She regards processing instruction (VanPatten, 2002) and focus-on-form effective in helping learners notice relevant input cues that might have been ignored. Given the importance of instruction, and particularly that of processing instruction and focus-onform, teachers' cognition in this regard should be examined.

As instruction is playing an inevitably significant role, the issue we should be concerned about is whether teachers' beliefs and perception about grammar instruction are important and how they might have shaped instructional decisions and ultimately effectiveness of instruction. This section first reviews teachers' cognition reported in different aspects and then presents the possible correspondence between teachers' cognition and teaching practices.

One essential part of teachers' cognition is teachers' knowledge of grammar and their metalinguistic awareness.

In examining the KAL (knowledge about language) of teachers in the UK national curriculum, Chandler, Robinson and Noyes (1988), Williamson and Hardman (1995) and Wray (1993) assessed the student-teachers' knowledge of grammatical forms, nature of

grammatical rules, nature of spoken and written language, language variation and literary language.

According to Wray (1993: p. 55), for example, "the level of grammatical knowledge of these student-teachers was not particularly high (i.e. low success rates in identifying adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, etc)". Similar findings were found in these studies indicating the student-teachers' lack of metalinguistic knowledge. Two notable studies (Andrews, 1994, 1999a) conducted in EFL contexts (in Hong Kong) also reported consistent findings about the deficiency in grammatical knowledge of (prospective) teachers. In Andrews (1999a), a 60-item test was used to compare the knowledge of grammar and grammatical terminology of four groups. They were non-native speaker (NNS) teachers of English, NNS prospective teachers of English, English nativespeaker (NS) prospective teachers with a background in English Studies, and English NS prospective teachers of modern languages. Andrews found that the non-native teachers of English performed significantly better than the native speaker groups in the test generally. Andrews (1999a) suggested a need for pre-service teacher programmes to devote more time developing students' knowledge about language.

Another integral part of teachers' cognition is teachers' beliefs. According to Basturkmen (2012: p. 282), the definition of teachers' beliefs varies: "the term is generally used to refer to evaluative propositions which teachers hold consciously or unconsciously and which they accept as true while recognizing that other teachers may hold alternative beliefs on the same issue". Below outlines in more detail teachers' beliefs reported in the literature towards: 1) grammar pedagogy and 2) written grammar feedback/error. There

seems to be a consensus among teachers from different nationalities (e.g. UK: Chandler, 1988; Burgess & Etherington, 2002; US: Eisenstein-

Ebsworth & Schweers, 1997; Schulz, 1996, 2001; Thu, 2009; Iran: Alijanian, 2012) that grammar instruction is essential and effective (particularly explicit grammar instruction), and that a number of variables shaped their belief, some of which are their own learning experience and perception of students' emphasis on grammar. Teachers also tend to value feedback and error correction, believing that grammar errors should be corrected even when they do not affect comprehension. Non-native speaking teachers seem to pay much attention to language accuracy and more stringent towards error correction than native English speakers. Most teachers

prefer direct feedback instead of indirect or implicit feedback.

A number of studies reported correspondence between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practice specifically concerning task design (e.g. Kim, 2006); teaching orientations (e.g. Tam, 2006; Farrell & Lim, 2005) and teaching approaches, and also teaching activities used (e.g. Vibulpol, 2004). It was found that teachers' language learning beliefs can shape their instructional practices and decisions. For example, teachers who believe that their students can benefit from grammar drills tend to adopt a traditional approach to grammar teaching (Farrell

& Lim, 2005), or a communicative one if otherwise (Wong & Barrea-Marlys, 2012). Because of the close correspondence between teachers' cognition and instructional decisions, it is essential to examine teachers' cognition towards the teaching and learning

of simple past tense in this study. The rationale of focusing on the acquisition of simple past tense by second language learners is explained in the next section.

2.7 Why Simple Past Tense? What is the Difficulty Involved?

Findings in the literature show that functional categories (e.g. tense, articles, etc.) are not available in the initial state of second language acquisition. The Minimal Trees Hypothesis, for example, contends that only lexical categories (e.g. the noun phrase) are available for first language transfer (L1 transfer) in the initial state but not functional categories which will emerge gradually triggered by positive evidence in the input (i.e. accessibility to grammatical sentences in the second language): "only lexical categories are present at the earliest stages of …L2 acquisition, and…during acquisition functional projections develop in succession" (Vainikka & Young- Scholten, 1996: p. 7). According to Chan (2013), however, TP (Tense Phrase) is in fact present in the initial state; in other words, the production of L2 (second language) may not be an accurate reflection of what L2 learners know. Thus, though second language learners are found to have the underlying representation of tense, they fail to produce the corresponding form to express the tense meaning. Thus, the challenge for teachers is to help L2 learners map forms and meaning in acquiring tense.

A number of studies have been conducted concerning acquisition of tense and aspect by Cantonese ESL learners. Tense marking is regarded as a major problem Hong Kong learners face (Green, 1991; McArthur, 2002; Law, 2005). Different accounts have been put forward to explain the situation, which seem to be related to the principle and essence of Input Processing (IP) (VanPatten, 2002: p. 757): "That learners are driven to get

meaning from input has a set of consequences, the first being that words (content lexical items) are searched out first… when context lexical items and a grammatical form both encode the same meaning and when both are present in a sentence/utterance, it is the lexical item that learners attend to… The use of a lexical approach by L2 learners in processing input seems to be the culprit". Regarding the use of bare verb forms to refer to past events, learners were found to rely on temporal adverbials to indicate or recover the timing of the event (McArthur, 2002). Concerning incorrect tense marking, there seems to be a universal account claiming that learners mark verbs that are lexicosemantically more event-like for tense first, and then mark increasingly less event-like verbs in stages (Robison, 1995). VanPatten (2015) reviewed an eye-tracking experiment on the acquisition of Spanish past tense by English L1 learners and the acquisition of English past tense by Spanish L1 learners. Learners were required to listen to the sentences in which temporal adverbials and verbal inflections were mismatched or matched very well (e.g. "Yesterday I am talking to John" vs. "Now I'm talking to John" (p. 117)). Findings show that beginning and intermediate learners tended to rely on adverbials to recognize temporal reference whereas advanced learners depended on inflections. This was found to be true for both Spanish L1 and English L1 learners.

VanPatten (2015) generalized that relying on lexical items rather than grammatical inflections to obtain temporal reference is a universal strategy without regarding L1 experience. He also suggested that processing instruction can circumvent this incorrect processing strategy and make L2 learners aware of past tense markers.

The above studies might give some insights into the problems posed by tense to Cantonese ESL learners. Yet the reliance on non-target-like forms alone in concluding

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the acquisition problem of tense does not reveal the true picture about the underlying representation of tense in the interlanguage grammars, as it could be the case suggested by the Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis: "even in the absence of consistent or appropriate inflectional morphology, functional categories and features are fully specified in the grammar" (White, 2003: p. 194). In Chan (2013), Cantonese ESL learners were found to have an underlying knowledge of tense, but they have difficulty in mapping forms and meaning. The main challenge to teachers is thus to help learners map the forms and the meaning.

2.8 Overcoming Tense Usage Difficulties.

Many people agree that English is popular in this global era. English influences many fields of life in our country and it is learned as foreign language.

According to Brown (2000), foreign language contexts are those in which students do not have ready-made context for communication beyond their classroom. The students do not use English for their daily communication in their classroom or at their home.

A foreign language is a non mother tongue or not an official language. One of foreign languages learned in Indonesia is English. And as a matter of fact, it is one of the compulsory subjects that should be taught at school starting from Junior High Schools. Madya, (2000) states that, teaching as a foreign language means that English is taught as a foreign language, a language spoken by people from other countries and not used for formal communication and/or daily conversation. Through this definition, it is clear that teaching English in Indonesia is regarded as teaching English as a foreign language because English is not spoken by Indonesian people in formal and/or daily conversation.

The purpose of learning English as a foreign language are for example travel abroad, communication with native speakers, reading foreign literature, etc. Foreign language usually requires more formal instruction and other measures to compensate for the lack of environmental support.

To overcome the difficulties the following factors must be taken into consideration.

Teacher

The teacher is a very important aspect in teaching learning process. A teacher is someone who sees what can be accomplished, not what cannot be achieved. The teacher creates an environment where children feel safe to explore and learn. They help children to accept that they will never be perfect persons. They also help children not to be afraid of making mistakes is a necessary path for learning. The teachers are supposed to be not afraid of trying new things or do things that may make them look a little odd in order to help their students to learn. The teacher helps the students to see things in different ways. The teachers need to know that to expect their students to become lifelong learners they must be willing to do the same. At the junior high school, the teachers generally act as a guide and a coach. The teacher needs to explain the material clearly at the early minutes and spend the other minutes to other activities that can attract the students' interest in learning English. The teacher should have interested ways to teach

English to the students. In presenting the materials in the classroom the teacher needs to use instructional media because it carries information that will be delivered to the students. The students generally get bored easily if the teacher is not creative. They will be lazy to learn the materials given.

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i.   Students

The other aspect in teaching learning process is the students. A student refers to one who is devoted to learning. A student also means one who attends a school, or who seeks knowledge from professional teachers or from books. A student will not have high interest in learning the English grammar especially tenses material if they do not know how to learn it well students are therefore to be motivated enough to learn the subject.

ii.   Materials

The material also influences the teaching learning process. Material is the substance or matter of which anything is made or may be made. Materials having a logical connection with a subject matter or the consequential events or facts, or the knowledge of which will significantly affect a decision or course of action. The materials should be designed well to make the students interested in learning it. Teacher may also improve the students' interest in learning through well

developed materials.

iii.   Method

Methodology is defined as a technique "how to" or the way in teaching.

Method is the practical of the objective of teaching in the classroom with a variety of audiences and contexts. Method is related to material, teacher-student roles and behaviors. Method refers to an orderly procedure or process; regular manner of doing anything. The way the teachers give the material influence the students' interest in

learning the material. The use of the media can attract the students' interest. If the students are interested in the way the teachers teach, they will be likely reach a good achievement.

iv.   Media

The selection of instructional media is one of the components that need attention in planning of learning. Learning English will be interesting and easily understood by the students when teachers design the media carefully and when teachers can use their function. Media are very important components in teaching English grammar especially tense. Media mean something that can be used to help the students understand the material in learning English grammar especially

tenses. Educational media aim to create more active and critical media user. There are many kinds of educational media and they have their own characteristic. Therefore, the teacher needs to understand the characteristic so that they can chose appropriate media for certain subject.

According to Winoto (2005), media can serve four general purposes:

a. Media can help to simplify the teaching and they can help to complete it.

b. Media allow the teachers' point of view to practice the principle of teaching object and illustration.

c. With the help of the media, the use of the mother tongue of the students can be avoided.

d. Media are instrument of motivation if they are use to stimulate the learning process.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research approach used to collect data. It includes the design, population, sample and sampling technique, research instruments and data collection procedures and data analysis plan.

3.1 Research Design

The research approach is qualitative. Qualitative research is a type of scientific research.

Behets and Vergauwen (2006) noted that using qualitative methods is essential when studying field experiences. The descriptive nature of such studies allows readers to learn about specific events and make judgments regarding the ability to generalize the findings to their own settings. According to Baha (2016), descriptive survey describes what exists and tries to pave the ground for finding new facts. It includes gathering of data related to, products, people, individuals, events and situations and then organize, tabulates, depicts and describe the outcome. The major purpose of descriptive research is description of the state of affairs as it exists at present, and the main characteristic of this method is that the researcher has no control over the variables; he can only report what has happened or what is happening. This research therefore describes the situation of tense usage in Nyimati JHS One in the Sissala West District of the Upper West region in Ghana.

3.2 Population

A population is a group of elements or causes, whether individuals, objects or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the result of research (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001). The target population for the study was the pupils of Nyimati JHS in the Sissala West District of the Upper West region in Ghana. Sissala west district lies within the Guinea Savana belt of Ghana with the district capital situated at Gwolu. It can be found in the north eastern corner of Upper West Region. The total land area of Sissala West Disrct is about 411,289km and is about 25% of the total land area of Upper West region. The annual rainfall is between 800mm to 1,000mm.

The school is found along the main road leading to Wa. The school is surrounded by flowers and trees and has a borehole as a source of water. Teachers in the school have bungalows in which they live. There are six regular teachers, four national service personals and four NABCO personals. The JHS block is separated from the primary block, but is on the same compound. Paintings on the walls are worn out and currently the block has no windows or doors. The roofing sheets leak when it rains. Parents or guardians of the students in the school are basically traders and farmers and most of them are not educated and are not really interested in the provision of the needed requirements for their wards' education. The school has a total population of 227 pupils made up of 123 girls and 104 boys. The individuals involved in this study were the JHS One students of the school (N = 51). The first term exams scores for English language were analyzed.

3.3 Sample and Sampling technique

The Census Method is also called as a Complete Enumeration Survey Method wherein each and every item in the universe is selected for the data collection. The universe might constitute a particular place, a group of people or any specific locality which is the complete set of items that are of interest in any particular situation. The census method is most commonly used by the government in connection with the national population, housing census, agriculture census, etc. where the vast knowledge about these fields is required. Whenever the entire population is studied to collect the detailed data about every unit, then the census method is applied. One of the major advantages of census method is the accuracy as each and every unit of the population is studied before drawing any conclusions of the research. When more and more data are collected the degree of correctness of the information also increases. Also, the results based on this method are less biased. The census method can be applied in a situation where the separate data for every unit in the population is to be collected, such that the separate action for each is taken. For example, the preparation of the voter's list for election purposes, income tax assessment, recruitment of personnel, etc. are some of the areas where the census method is adopted. This method can be used where the population is comprised of heterogeneous items, i.e. different characteristics. Though the census method provides a complete data of the population under study, it is very costly and time-consuming. Often, this method is dropped down because of these constraints and the sampling method, where certain items representative of the larger group, is selected to draw the conclusions. In this research the census technique was used to select all the JHS One students (N = 22) of

Nyimati JHS to examine their first term exams answer sheets for English Language for the 2019/2020 academic year.

3.4 Research Instruments

The instruments used for this research are observations, interview and test,

3.4.1 Observation:

It is the process of gathering information about the child by watching, listening and recording. The researcher used observation as one of the instruments to elicit information for the study. In order to obtain appropriate data on pupils tense usage, pupils' exercise books for English Language were observed. Most students in schools in Ghana fall short in the development of written and spoken proficiency in English in terms of tense usage. A visit to Nyimati JHS and a probe into the student's English language exercise books revealed that tense usage difficulty was a case in the school. In their books it was observed that they made mistakes such as ignorance of rule restriction, overgeneralization, incomplete application of rule, and false concept hypothesized. Most of the students could not write a lot of sentences in the past tense.

3.4.2 Interview

It is the process of gathering information about the child through face to face interactions. The researcher also used interview to gather the needed information from the sample. All the students were also called and they were involved in an interview communication. It was also observed that the students do not only make mistakes in written English but also in their speech. This was done by conducting face to face

interview which lasted for three hours due to privacy. Also, some teachers were interviewed to gather other important information.

3.4.3 Test

Test is a task or series of tasks which are used to measure specific traits or attributes in pupils. In educational settings, test includes paper and pen instruments, which contains questions that students and pupils respond to. It is also defined as a device that makes one demonstrates his or her level of ability, mastery of competency in a specific area. It is also said to be a measure of a person's ability, knowledge or performance in a given domain or measuring a person's ability knowledge (Brown, 2004; Hughes, 2003). It takes series of task to obtain information on an individual behavior. The reason why test is chosen is: it allows individuals to demonstrate their competencies in a specific area and also less expensive and time efficient. Test can be considered as stimulus that helps the gathering of information from pupils. Despite the above advantages, test may have a subjective tendency that is the assessor can interpret test scores using his or her discretions. There is also the tendency of the teacher being partial in administering and scoring test items. Finally, the reliability and validity of test items may not be assured. The test that was used for this research was the end of first term exams for the 2019/2020 academic year. The exams answer sheets of students were observed and errors made in the usage of tenses under ignorance of rule restriction, overgeneralization, incomplete application of rule, and false concept hypothesized were discussed

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

To enable the researcher collect the needed data from the sample participants, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the University of Education Winneba. The letter was further used to obtain permission from the English department to collect data from the schools. The researcher personally went to the schools and sought permission from the school authorities.

To safeguard the research participants' interests, the researcher was commitment to ensuring the autonomy of research participants, and the people were protected from exploitation of their vulnerability. The dignity of all the research participants was respected and participants were not used simply as a means to achieve research objectives. A commitment to minimizing the risks associated with the research, including psychological and social risks, and maximizing the benefits that accrue to the research participants were taken into consideration. Commitment to ensuring a fair distribution of the risks and benefits resulting from the research was taken into consideration as a form of justice. Those who took on the burdens of the research participation shared in the benefits of the knowledge gained. Respect for the community was not left out. Respect for the values and interests of the community in which the research was conducted was employed and the community was protected from harm.

The researcher ensured that people understood what it meant to participate in the research study so that they could decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they wanted to participate. All the information was provided in a language and at an educational level that the participant understood.

After these ethics were taken into account, the English exercise books of the students in the JHS one class were observed. It was observed that the students made a lot of mistakes in tense usage. Few students were also called and they were involved in an interview communication. It was also observed that the students do not only make mistakes in written English but also in their speech. The researcher therefore requested that at the end of the term the Exams answer sheets for English Language be observed for analysis to know the impact of their wrong tense usage on their performances. The exams sheets after the exams were collected and observed and tense mistakes made were collated and analyzed.

3.6 Data Analysis Plan

The researcher analyzed the data qualitatively through the following steps. First, the researcher underlined the sentences which contain errors in the use of past tense. After that, the researcher put the sentences into the checklist table. The errors made by the students were classified into their types based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed by Dulay et al. (1982). Surface Strategy Taxonomy categorized errors into errors of omission, addition, misordering, and misformation. In order to make it easier for the researcher to classify the types of errors, the researcher provided the correction. Then, the researcher classified the errors into their types: omission, addition, misordering, and misformation. In this step, the researcher also predicted the possible causes of error that the students made. The causes were first analyzed and categorized into over generalization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concept hypothesis. Then, the results of the analysis were triangulated by the data from the teacher and students' interviews. The last step in the data analysis was tabulating the errors. It was done to determine the frequency of occurrence of the errors in each category

and to figure out the most and the less difficult grammatical items for the students to understand and use. The researcher further observed the end of first term exams results of the students and analysed to find out if the students' performances were good or bad since English Language was the mode of communication for the exams written. Students were further interviewed to find out if they were able to use their tenses well in communication and when they were writing the exams. This was done to ascertain if there is any degree of failure as a results of tense usage difficulties. Further views and suggestions from teachers were analysed to also find out the best ways to address tense usage difficulties among the students.

Data collected was discussed under the three main research questions stated as:

What are the leading causes of problems in tense usage?

What are the effects of tense usage difficulties on students' academic performances for Nyimati, JHS One?

What strategies can be put in place to address tense usage in difficulties in Nyimati, JHS One?

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter deals with presentation and analysis of the data collected from the field of study by the researcher. The purpose of this paper is to identify the underlying factors for the weakness of tense usage and address the practical problems faced by the students of Nyimati JHS one students to use tenses appropriately in communication.

A test was given to the students out of which common errors made by the students were identified and analysed. Again, teachers were interviewed to seek their opinion on causes of poor academic performance for the students they teach, teachers' suggestions on what to do in order to make learners' with tense usage difficulties comfortable in the school and Strategies put in place to help students with tense usage in the school. An observation of the first term exams scores for the sampled pupils was also done to have a fair idea on the impact of students' poor tense usage on their general academic performances in the subjects they study at school.

This chapter thus discussed data collected based on three main research questions centered on: (1) the tense usage errors made by students that affect their academic performance, (2) the effects of poor tense usage on students' academic performances for the various subjects in the school, (3) the strategies put in place to address poor tense usage.

4.1 Tense usage errors that affect Students' Academic Performance

The first objective of this research was concerned with tense usage errors that affect student's academic performance. Among the typical difficulties in English Language;

tense usage problems, word recognition, reading comprehension and reading rate (Feagans, 1983), the researcher singled out tense usage as a major contributor to poor academic performance and sought to investigate.

4.1.1 Teachers opinion on causes of poor academic performance

Teachers were asked in a structured interview to select among: Tense usage difficulties, School Administration, Quality of the staff, Learner's previous academic background and Teaching methods, the one which in their view were the causes of students' poor academic performance. The result is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Teachers opinion on causes of poor academic performance

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Tense usage difficulties	4	40
School administration	1	10
Quality of the staff	1	10
Learner's previous academic background	2	20
Teaching methods	2	20
TOTAL	10	100

Table 1 indicates that majority of teachers said that tense usage difficulties was the main cause of poor academic performance in Koforidua Presbyterian JHS One. Four (4) of the respondents representing 40% responded to that effect, learners previous academic background representing 20%, while teaching methods were also another strong contributor of poor academic performance representing 20%.

Previous research suggests that grammar mistakes are generally caused by problem related to students' cognitive skills and their individual traits Mayer (2002). Thornbury (1999) claims that mistakes may also be caused by language teaching strategies used by teacher, according to Thornbury many factors cause affecting on English learning, such as the family background plays vital role in success of learning process in the case of the country like Ghana where majority of people are not well educated.

The results in the table 1 above however indicates that, tense usage difficulty according to the teachers really affect the students' academic performance and was in agreement with Ricket, List and Lerner (1989) findings that reading difficulties are the principal causes of failure in school.

4.1.2 Common tense usage errors made by students

Saadiyah (2009) briefly said that learning L2 is a lifelong process and it is often a challenging experience for L2 learners. It also applies to Ghanaian students who learn English as foreign language. As a target language, English has rules which are different from the local Ghanaian language that makes students commit errors. According to James (1988) cited by Saadiyah

(2009) errors in writing, such as, in the use of tenses, prepositions and vocabulary are the most common and frequent type of errors made by learners. The learners usually face difficulties in learning the grammatical aspects of the Target Language (TL), such as in subject-verb agreement, the use of preposition, articles and the use of correct tenses. Amaliyah (2009) stated that students' difficulties in grammar areas might be caused by interlingual factors like different systems between English and Ghanaian language.

Brown (1985) cited by Amaliyah (2009) said that a learner inevitably makes countless errors in learning the target language.

According to Ancker (2000) and Saadiyah (2009), making mistakes or errors is a natural process of learning and must be considered as part of cognition. Candling (2001: 69) cited by Saadiyah (2009) adds that the L2 learners' errors are potentially important for the understanding of the processes of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Moreover, it is understood that learning an L2 is a gradual process, during which mistakes are to be expected in all stages of learning. Ferris (2002) and Saadiyah (2009) stated that mistakes will not disappear simply because they have been pointed out to the learners, contrary to what some language learners and teachers believe.

Richards (1974) argues that many of the learners' errors happen due to the strategies that they use in language acquisition, especially their L2. The problem includes the reciprocal interference of the target language items; i.e., negative effect of their prior knowledge of their L1 on their absorption of L2. In this situation, error analysis would allow teachers to figure out on what areas to be focused and what kind of attention is needed in an L2 classroom.

Based on the above discussion, the researcher thought it is important to analyze the errors in using past tense to know the errors that the students made so that the teachers, the parents, and others who care about the students can decide what treatment they should give to the students.

Amaliyah (2009) stated there is a value in analyzing errors, since this will lead at least to a better understanding of the difficulties that students face, and perhaps will contribute to

the development of pedagogical strategies. The errors will reflect the problems that students face, which should help the teachers decide what areas they should pay more attention and emphasize

on. There are many other benefits we can get from analyzing errors. Vahdatinejad (2008) said that error analysis can be used to determine what a learner still needs to be taught. It provides the necessary information about what is lacking in his or her competence. He also makes a distinction between errors and lapses (simple mistakes). According to him, lapses are produced even by native speakers, and can be corrected by themselves. They need spot correction rather than remedial, which is needed for errors. In addition, Candling (2001) cited by Saadiyah (2009) considered Error Analysis as "the monitoring and analysis of learner's language". He referred to an error as a deviation. Moreover, according to Richards et al., (1996:127) as cited by Nzama (2004), error analysis has been conducted to identify strategies which learners use in language learning, to track the causes of learner's errors, obtain information on common difficulties in language learning or on how to prepare teaching materials. Similarly, as cited by Nzama (2004), Michaelides (1990:30) states that the systematic analysis of student's errors can be of great value to all those concerned, i.e., teachers, students and the researchers. For teachers it can offer a clear and reliable picture of his students' knowledge of the target language. According to Corder (1967), error analysis has two objects: one theoretical and the other applied. The theoretical object is to understand what and how a learner learns when he/she studies an L2. The applied object is to enable the learners to learn more efficiently by using the knowledge of his dialect for pedagogical purposes. At the same time, the investigation of errors can serve two purposes, diagnostic (to in-point the problem) and

prognostic (to make plans to solve a problem). Corder also said that it is diagnostic because it can tell us the learner's grasp of a language at any given point during the earning process. It is also prognostic because it can tell the teacher to modify learning materials to meet the learners' problems. Amaliyah (2009) explained that error analysis serves three purposes, which are to find out the level of language proficiency the learner has reached, to obtain information about common difficulties in language learning, and to find out how people learn a language. To conduct an error analysis, the researcher is sure that analyzing the students' writing is the best way. Similarly, Safiah (1978) cited by said that such errors can be seen clearly in the learners' written performance.

A reading passage was thus administered to the students in the class. The researcher noted the errors made by the students while answering the comprehension questions that followed the passage and were categorized as; misformation of sentence, omission of words needed, addition of words not needed and misordering of words. The errors made by the students selected for the research is tabulated and analysed below.

Table 2: Common tense usage difficulties as Per Learners' Data

Type of Error	Frequency	Percentage
Errors of Misformation of sentence	50	75.75
Errors of Omission or a word needed	11	16.66
Errors of Addition of words not needed	5	7.57
Errors of Misordering of words	0	0
Total	66	100

Analysis on the common tense usage difficulties was done from the test administered to the students. The results revealed that words misformation was the most common error

with a percentage of 75.75%. This kind of error is indicated by the use of wrong form or morpheme or structure. Brown (2007) stated that there are four sources of errors, that is, interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, context of learning, and communication strategy.

Word omission was also a common tense usage difficulties with percentage of 16.66% word omitted. Brown (2007), stated that during the early stages of second language acquisition, errors of omission are found in a greater abundance and across a greater variety of morphemes. In the intermediate stages, when the learners have been exposed to more languages, other types of errors are more likely to occur.

Other common tense usage difficulties included words added at a percentage of 7.57%. This kind of error is characterized by the presence of an item which is unnecessary or must not appear in well-formed sentences. According to Dulay et al. (1982), this kind of error is characterized by the presence of an item which is unnecessary or must not appear in well-formed sentences.

Word misordering however was not observed with a percentage of 0%. Misordering errors are characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or a group of morphemes in the sentence Brown (2007). The presence of these errors made by the students is an indication that the students did not understand what they were reading.

4.1.3 Discussion on the Causes of the Errors

An observation was done on the test given to the students and major causes of the errors made were identified. Four major causes were identifies and are discussed below.

a. Ignorance of Rule Restriction

 Ignorance of rule restriction happens when the learners do not apply the rules appropriately because the learners fail to observe the restriction of existing structures (Brown, 2007).

Based on the analysis, the researcher found that the ignorance of rule restriction happened because the students did not understand the structure of the past tense. The following sentence is an example that the researcher took from the data:

"When I celebrate my birthday."

 The sentence is grammatically wrong because the instruction that the researcher gave to the students is to make a recount text about the best moment in their life so that the sentences should be in the past form. Thus, the correct sentence is "When I celebrated my birthday."

Another example is

"After the test was finish."

The sentence is grammatically wrong because according to the pattern of the past tense as stated by Brown (2007), the word after '*to be*' should not be a verb. In order to make the sentence grammatically correct, the verb "finish" should be changed into an adjective, that is, "finished". Thus, the correct sentence is "After the test was finished."

There are four sources of errors according to Brown (2007). They are interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, context of learning, and communication strategy. Based on the analysis, those examples above belong to context of learning. In this example, the students seem to memorize the pattern of past tense, but could not contextualize properly.

b. Incomplete Application of Rule

According to Richards (1974), incomplete application of rule happens when the learners' errors derive from the faulty comprehension of distinction in the target language. Based on the analysis, the researcher found that the students wrongly understood the rule of the target language. The following sentence is the sample of incomplete application of rule that the researcher took from the data: "It my new experience." It seemed that the student did not know that the sentence needs the linking verb *be* (*was*) to make the sentence accurate. The sentence should be "It was my new experience." Based on Brown (2007), the source of this error is interlingual transfer because the students seemed to transfer the language from their native language that is *Bahasa Indonesia*. Another example is the sentence "I was very liked it." The sentence is grammatically wrong because the students put the *be* (*was*) in the sentence while there was already a verb *liked*. The student did not know that the sentence does not use the proper pattern of past tense.

c. False Concept Hypothesized

 False concept hypothesized happens when the learners fail to develop the rules to make an acceptable utterance. Here is an example from the data: "I acceptance in MTs." The source of the error in this sentence is context of learning. It is because this sentence is unacceptable and grammatically wrong since the word "acceptance" is a "noun". The

noun "acceptance" should be changed into a verb, that is, "accept". It should also be in the past form. Furthermore, based on the context, to make the sentence sensible and acceptable, the sentence should be in the form of past passive voice, thus, the sentence should be " I was accepted in MTs." Another example is the sentence "Although this beach interesting looser with other beaches". This sentence is grammatically wrong. Besides, it is also difficult for the readers to understand the sentence. Thus, he source of the error in this sentence is communication strategy. The student seems to have difficulties in delivering their ideas.

d. Overgeneralization

Overgeneralisation happens when the learners create a deviant structure on the basis of their experience of other structures in the target language. In other words, the learners generalize certain rules to create other sentences. Based on the analysis, overgeneralization occurs when the students regularize the irregular verb. Here is an example from the data: "We falled apart." In the sentence, the student regularized the irregular verb "fall" to become "falled." The word should be "fell" because it is an irregular verb. Thus, the sentence should be "We fell apart". Another example is the sentence "I sleeped at the car". In the sentence, the student also regularizes the irregular verb " sleep " by adding /-ed/, so it becomes "sleeped". The past form of the verb "sleep" is "slept" since it is an irregular verb.

Thus, the correct sentence should be " I slept in the car". Those two examples have the same source of errors, that is, intralingual transfer because the students overgeneralize the irregular verbs into regular verbs.

4.2 Effects of tense usage difficulties on Academic Performance

The second research question sought to find out the effects of common tense usage difficulties on students' academic performances (First term exams; 2019/2020 academic year), for JHS One pupils Nyimati JHS was analysed. 22 students who were identified to have problem with common tense usage difficulties' scores in the various subjects studied at JHS were analysed to see if their difficulty had any effect on their performances in the various subjects.

4.2.1 Effects of tense usage difficulties on students' academic performance

The first term exams scores for the students selected, for all the subjects studied in the school, was observed and analysed. The averages of the scores gained by the students with tense usage difficulties in each subject was calculated and analysed and compared with their counterparts who were without difficulties.

Table 3: effects of tense usage difficulties on students' academic performance

Subject	Mean (%) score students with comprehension difficulties	Mean (%) score students without comprehension difficulties

MATHS	26.5	67.8
ENGLISH	22.6	57
SCIENCE	31.3	66
SOCIAL	33	76.4
ICT	34.6	56
BDT	47.6	69.1
RME	46.5	76.8
FRENCH	58.5	70.1
TWI	41.8	65.3

Table 3 above shows poor average scores for almost all the subjects for students with common tense usage difficulties. In mathematics the average score for the selected students was 26.5%; far below average compared to 67.8% for those without difficulties. Even though the subject is mathematics, instructions for the exams were in English and because these students selected are students who have common tense usage difficulties, they were not able to construct their sentences well to what the examiner wanted. A typical indication of this is when the students were interviewed and majority of them said questions given in the exams were difficult and their major concern was that they did not understand the questions at all in most cases. This confirms their performance as indicated above. In English language, the average score for students with difficulties was 22.6%, which is also far below a pass compared to those without the problem who had 57%. It happens to also be the subject that recorded the least average score among the other subjects for the weak students. English language recording low average scores raises a lot of concern since it is the medium of communication in writing exams in all the other subjects. It is therefore not surprising that the students recorded low scores in almost all the other subjects because the students could not write what the examiners wanted in the

exams and thereby not able to give the correct answers in the exams written. In science, the weak students recorded an average score of 31.3% while the good ones recorded 66%. Furthermore the weak students' average in social studies was also poor. The students recorded an average of 33.0% in the subject while their counterparts without difficulties recording 76.4. In ICT, another below average score was recorded for the weak students; thus 34.6%.

 In BDT, RME and TWI, the students' scores were quite higher however; it was still not up to a 50%. The average scores were 47.6%, 46.5% and 41.8% respectively. In these subjects the weak student's scores were quite higher and close to their counterpart in the stronger group who had 69.1%, 76.8%, 65.3% respectively compared to the other subjects discussed earlier.

If the table is critically analyzed it could be seen that the students' average scores in mathematics (26.45%) and English Language (22.59%) were seriously low and could be said that the students' inability to read and comprehend seem to have most effect on the scores for English Language and Mathematics than the other subjects.

The impact of common tense usage difficulties on French was less than in all the other subjects. It is quite surprising that the students are able to write the French language and obtain higher mark with an average of 58.45%. With French being another language subject, it could be said that the students had a strong foundation in the primary school than they had in English language or the French exams was probably too easy to pass.

When you take Ghanaian Language (Twi) which is another Language subject, students' average score (41.82%) was also slightly higher than in English language, and can be said that the students are able to write in their local language more than in English Language.

From the table above, pupils' inability to write in English language have a great effect on almost all the other subjects except French, which recorded over 50% on the average. From the table above, it is seen that, the weak students failed in most of the subjects recording averages below 50%. These result confirm what Carmine, Silbet and Kameenui (1997) reported that common tense usage difficulties is the principal causes of failure in schools.

4.2.2 Students' responses to their performance in the first term exams in an interview

In an interview, students' opinion on their first term exams in general was sought, the intention was to identify if students could read to understand the questions that were given to them. The result is shown in table 4 below.

Table 4: Students' responses to their performance in the first term exams

Students' responses	Frequency	Percentage
Could write good sentences for answers	5	22.7
Could not write good sentences for answers	17	77.3
Total	22	100

When the sampled students were called and were involved in an interview communication, they were asked if they could write good sentences for answers to questions that were given to them in their first term exams. The results show that majority

54

of the students (17), representing 77.3% said they could not write good sentences for answers to questions that were given them in the exams and as such, they could not answer the questions that were given them resulting in the acquisition of low percentages. A few (5) representing 22.7% were those who said they could not write good sentences for answers to what was given to them in the exams. It was also observed that the students do not only make mistakes in written English but also in their speech. It was evident when the students were asked the same questions after the passage used for the research was read to them. Even when they were asked the questions by the researcher, most of them could not give good sentences for answers.

4.2.2 Tense usage difficulties trends for male and female students.

For the students who had difficulty in tense usage difficulties, the researchers sought to find out if there were any significant differences in their academic performances for the various subjects studied in the school. The result is indicated in table 7 below.

Table 5: Comparing the tense usage difficulties differences for male and female students in their academic performances using Mann-Whitney U statistics.

SUBJECT	STUDENT	NO. OF STUDENTS	MEAN RANK	LEVEL OF SIG. $P < 0.05$
MATHS	Female	13	12.85	
	Male	9	9.56	0.24
	Total	22		
ENGLISH	Female	13	10.88	
	Male	9	12.39	0.593
	Total	22		
SCIENCE	Female	13	11.77	
	Male	9	11.11	0.815

	Total	22		
SOCIALSTUDIES	Female	13	11.5	
	Male	9	11.5	1
	Total	22		
ICT	Female	13	10.5	
	Male	9	12.94	0.385
	Total	22		
BDT	Female	13	12.08	
	Male	9	10.67	0.616
	Total	22		
RME	Female	13	12.35	
	Male	9	10.28	0.462
	Total	22		
FRENCH	Female	13	11.92	
	Male	9	10.89	0.713
	Total	22		
TWI	Female	13	11.27	
	Male	9	11.83	0.84
	Total	22		

To investigate whether male and female students differ on the impact of tense usage difficulties on academic performance, Manwhitney U statistics was calculated on their first term exams scores with the SPSS version 20. The analysis showed that there was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between the performance of male and female students in all the subjects.

In general there seems to be a general agreement by researchers that, boys are poor on tense usage difficulties than girls as numerous studies conducted on tense usage difficulties between boys and girls reveal that girls outperform boys in tense usage difficulties (Topping et al. 2003; Gambell and Hunter 2010; White, 2007; Lynn and Mikk 2009). According to recent research by Lerner (2006), there is a significance gender effect on ability to use tense.   Reid et al., (2009), study on gender differences in tense usage

difficulties have also confirmed that the disability is higher in males than in females with the average ratio being four males to one female.

From the table above, it is realized however that the impact of tense usage difficulties on the academic performance of students in the school was rather higher in female students than in male students. This was also evident in the interview conducted on the students.

4.2.3 Teachers' opinion on the effect of tense usage difficulties on students' academic performance.

Teachers' opinion on the extent to which they agree with the statement that poor tense usage difficulties affect academic performance, was sought. The responses of the teachers given during the interview was tabulated as indicated in table 6 below

Table 6: Teachers' opinion on the effect of tense usage difficulties on students' academic performance

Teachers View	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	9	90
Disagree	1	10
Total	10	100

From the table 6 above, Ninety percent (90%) of the teachers agreed that tense usage difficulties affect performance in all other academic subjects. Only 1 teacher representing 10% disagreed. The study thus found that majority of the teachers from the sampled school agreed that tense usage difficulties affected academic performance in all the examinable subjects. It is realized at this point that teachers' opinions are right from the

analysis of the performance of the students as indicated and analysed in table 3 and 4. This is also confirmed by Ricket, List and Lerner (1989) findings that tense usage difficulties are the leading cause of failure in academic performance

4.3 Strategies that Enhance tense usage difficulties

As the third research question, the researchers sough to find out what could be done to improve and make students with tense usage difficulties comfortable in the school.

4.3.1: Teachers' strategies used to enhance tense usage difficulties in the school

The skills and components of English have to be mastered by someone who teach and learn English because English is a key to interact with people in the world. However, English is not our own language; everyone will feel that it is difficult.

In teaching and learning English, grammar has a big effect in assisting the students to master the major target of learning English in communication. For example in writing, if a student wants to write a text but she/he does not understand about grammar, she/he will not produce a good text. This is one of the consideration in which grammar must be understood by the learner before she/he used English. In this case, the teachers have a big role in teaching grammar.

Chan (2016), stated that a range of activities were suggested; some (primary (10.98%) and secondary (21.57%)) suggested exposing students to various text types, for example, introducing simple past tense using stories, using reading materials written in simple past tense; giving students a passage for deducing the past tense form, and so forth. Other common suggestions proposed by both primary and secondary teachers included using

communicative activities, and combining different teaching methods to make teaching more interesting. Secondary teachers suggested using less mechanical activities (13.73%) but more task-based activities (5.88%).

Teachers were asked to state the strategies they use to enhance tense usage in their school. As a major stake holder in the school, they were asked to select among others the effective strategies relevant in improving students' tense usage difficulties in the school. What teaches said they used were tabulated and indicated in table 7.

Table 7: Strategies put in place to help students with tense usage difficulties in the school

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Use of class readers	6	60
cognitive collaborations	1	10
Correcting the errors made	2	20
Library lessons	0	0
Paraphrasing answers	1	10
Total	10	100

Table 7 shows strategies put in place to help students with tense usage difficulties in the school. It seemed that teachers readily followed the layout of English text books where reading comprehension was conducted every week. 60% of the respondents said they used class readers out of which they help students to answer comprehension questions that followed the passages but forsook library lessons which are equally important in eliminating tense usage difficulties. Ricket, List and Lerner (1989) indicated teachers

need knowledge about the assessment and treatment of tense usage difficulties. According to Moore (1999), to enhance tense usage in the class, strategies such as: (1) given direct explicit instructions, (2) encouraged cognitive collaborations, (3) Connect Reading to Students' Lives and their out-of-School literacies, (4) Show, Don't Tell, (5) Promote Transfer Across Genres and (6) Focused Instruction could be used. In respect to the above literature, only one out of the suggested by Moore (1999) was used by the teachers in the school. The percentage of use was also even very little as only 10% was recorded.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDAIONS   AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

5.1 Summary

The purpose of this paper is to identify the underlying factors for the weakness of tense usage and address the practical problems faced by the students of Nyimati JHS one students to use tenses appropriately in communication.

Chapter one presented a brief background information of the study, including the statement of the problem and purpose of the study. It listed four assumptions and stated the limitations and delimitations of the study. The chapter on the review of literature was structured under five headings: the Conceptual Framework, the concept of Tense, Tense Usage difficulty, error and mistakes in tense usage and overcoming tense usage difficulties. Chapter three dealt with the methods and procedures used for this study. The chapter focused on the design, population, sample and sampling technique, research instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis plan. Results of the study and discussion are presented in chapter four under the following headings: (a) types of errors made by students, (b) causes of errors made by students, (c) the effect of the errors made by students on their performance in English Language. Summary, conclusions and recommendations were made in chapter five.

5.2 Summary of findings

From the research the following findings were evident and are summarized below.

1. Tense usage difficulties had a negative impact on all the subjects learned in the school

2. Misformation of sentences was the commonest tense usage difficulty in the school

3. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls in all the subjects learnt in the school in relation to tense usage difficulties

4. Use of class readers was the most used strategy by the teachers to help students overcome their tense usage difficulties.

5.2 Conclusions

Based on the analysis, the researcher found 66 errors in the use of past tense made by the JHS one students of Nyimati. The types of errors that the researcher found in this research are errors of misformation, errors of omission, and errors of addition. There are two kinds of errors of omission. They consist of omission of *be* and omission of verbs in the past form. The frequency of errors of omission is 16.66%. It is the second highest frequency in the analysis. There are also two kinds of errors of addition in the analysis, that is, double marking and regularization. The frequency of errors of addition is 7.58%. It is the third highest frequency in the analysis. There is one kind of errors of misformation found in the analysis that is, alternating form. Errors of misformation have the highest frequency of occurrence, that is, 75.75%. The possible causes of errors that the researcher found in this research are overgeneralisation, ignorance of rule restriction, incomplete application of rules, and false concept hypothesized. Overgeneralization is found in about 3.03% of

the recount texts made by the students. Based on the analysis, over generalization occurs when the students regularize the irregular verbs. Ignorance of rule restriction is found to be the cause of about 68.18% of the errors in the recount texts made by the students. Based on the analysis, the researcher found that ignorance of rule restriction happens because the students do not understand the structure of the past tense. Incomplete application of rules is found in about 21.21% of the recount texts made by the students. False concept hypothesized is found in about 7.57% of the recount texts made by the students. It happened when the learners failed to develop the rules to make acceptable utterances.

Students' score in English language was the lowest among the four core subjects studied at the JHS.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the analysis, the researcher would like to offer suggestions to the students, the teachers, and the future researchers to improve the students' ability in writing recount text.

Firstly, to improve the students' ability in writing recount texts, some suggestions are addressed to the teachers. Firstly, clearer explanation about the different rules between Ghanaian language and English should be given by the teachers so that the students understand how to write in English especially in writing the recount texts. Then, the teachers need to find out the students' ability in using the past tense, so that they could know what the students lack and how to improve that. Next, the teacher should give the students exercises in writing recount text to make them more accustomed to writing in

English especially in writing recount texts. Lastly, the past tense with any written exercises should be integrated, so that the students not only learn the patterns of the past tense but also practice the use of the past tense rules.

Secondly, to improve the ability in writing the recount texts, a suggestion is addressed to the students. The students should ask the teachers if they encounter any difficulties in their studies. Thus, the teacher could know what the students need in order to improve their ability in writing recount texts that uses the past tense.

Finally, language teachers and language teaching materials need to focus on the areas in which learners are likely to face difficulties in mastering tense and aspect. Modern pedagogic grammar books must also address the lexical aspect in detail with a lot of exercises on the four types of verbs. Teachers can help the EFL learners address their shortcomings 'with an understanding of how lexical aspect factors in the learning of tense' (Cowan, 2008, p.354).

5.4 Suggestions for further studies

1. For the teacher, the researcher suggests to creatively find some interesting method which can motivate students in learning and effective to teach English.

2. The researcher also suggest to the English teacher to try to use song in teaching English especially in grammar.

3. The researcher hopes that other next researchers can use this research as a reference to conduct their research on the same field. It is really possible that there are other effective methods to teach English Grammar.

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